

Minnesota's Women's Economic Security Act (WESA)

[\(Laws of Minnesota 2014, Ch. 239\)](#)

Provision	Status of Implementation (as of Sept. 2015)
Addition of person with expertise in helping women get jobs in nontraditional occupations to the Governor's Workforce Development Council (Article 2, Sec. 2)	Planning Director of Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency appointed to Governor's Workforce Development Council in October 2014.
Grants to increase number of women in high-wage, high-demand, non-traditional jobs. (Art. 2, Sec. 3 & 7)	MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development awarded grants in early Dec. 2014 to eight organizations, both in the Twin Cities and throughout Greater Minnesota. An estimated 180 women will receive training in nontraditional jobs. An additional 2,300 women, 65 girls, and 270 professionals will receive training designed to remove barriers and overcome stereotypes that hinder women entering these occupations.
Unemployment benefits for quits due to sexual assault or stalking (Art. 2, Sec. 4 & 5)	Effective October 5, 2014. In 4 th quarter, 2014: 31 requests (2 of these were ineligible) for unemployment insurance (UI) when a quit was due to domestic violence, sexual abuse or stalking. This compares to 24 requests (5 of which were ineligible) in 4 th quarter, 2013 (when UI was available for quits due to domestic violence, but not for sexual assault or stalking.)
Certain businesses who contract with the state must certify compliance with equal pay laws. (Art. 2, Sec. 6 and 12)	Affects bid solicitations issued on or after August 1, 2014. To date, DHR has issued 586 Equal Pay Certificates to state contractors. DHR has initiated 12 audits of state contractors to ensure compliance with WESA's Equal Pay Certificate requirements.
Grants to develop model programs to encourage women to start businesses in high-growth, high-revenue industry sectors. (Art. 2, Sec. 8)	<p>Two grants (\$250,000 each) awarded in July 2014: one to WomenVenture in the Twin Cities and one to The Entrepreneur Fund, based in Duluth (in partnership with the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency).</p> <p>In May 2015, WomenVenture launched its <i>Scale Up! Twin Cities</i> program, providing 31 weeks of entrepreneurial training, financial management tools, and one-on-one coaching, plus access to capital for business expansion. Women-owned businesses that have been operational for three or more years and are ready for exponential growth (a 15% increase in revenue and 70% increase in workforce in the first two years after completing the program) were selected for the program.</p> <p>The Women's Business Center of The Entrepreneur Fund, which serves northeastern Minnesota, has recently launched IGNITE, a program linking 15-20 established, growth-</p>

	focused, women-owned businesses to resources, including expert consulting, networking events, and skills workshops. Six <i>IGNITE Forums</i> begin in late October.
\$250,000 to MN Dept. of Labor & Industry to encourage women in apprenticeships in high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional occupations. (Art. 2, Sec. 9)	Four grants awarded in early 2015 to the following organizations: The Construction Careers Foundation; The Association of Women Contractors; Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/Big Step (through the Minnesota AFL-CIO); and Summit Academy, OIC.
Study of possible state-administered retirement savings plan for private sector employees not offered a retirement savings plan by their employer. (Art. 2, Sec. 10 & 11)	MN Management & Budget has chosen Deloitte as the contractor for the study. Deloitte has interviewed stakeholders and is holding stakeholder workshops this fall. Study completion date is anticipated in December 2015.
Existing mandatory unpaid parental leave increased from 6 to 12 weeks, and expanded to include pregnancy-related health conditions. (Art. 3, Sec. 1, 2 and 5)	Effective July 1, 2014. To date, MN Dept. of Labor & Industry has received 11 workers' complaints, nine of which have been closed.
Expands allowable uses of personal sick leave benefits (for employees who have such benefits), including use for leave necessitated by sexual assault, domestic abuse, or stalking. (Art. 3, Sec. 3)	Effective July 1, 2014. To date, DOLI has received nine workers' complaints, five of which have been closed.
Employers must provide reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees (or for health conditions related to childbirth). (Art. 3, Sec. 4)	Effective May 12, 2014. To date, DOLI has received five workers' complaints, two of which have been closed.
Employer can't prohibit employees from discussing wages. (Art. 4, Sec. 2)	Effective July 1, 2014. To date, DOLI has received three workers' complaints, two of which are closed.
Additional workplace accommodations for nursing mothers. (Art. 4, Sec. 3)	Effective July 1, 2014. DOLI has received five workers' complaints, all of which closed as "paid/investigated"; i.e., DOLI investigated and, in some cases, back wages were paid.
Prohibition of workplace discrimination based on familial status (i.e., an employee having minor children or being pregnant). (Art.. 4, Sec. 6-9)	Since the effective date of this provision, May 12, 2014, there have been 13 familial status employment discrimination charges filed by MN Dept. of Human Rights. Eight were for employment-employer familial status discrimination and five for reprisal (employment) familial status discrimination.